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**Subject:** Greenwire- EPA rules water safe in Pa. town of 'Gasland' fame

## EPA rules water safe in Pa. town of 'Gasland' fame

Gabriel Nelson, E&E reporter

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U.S. EPA testing in Dimock, Pa., didn't find any water wells with unsafe levels of chemicals tied to hydraulic fracturing, the agency said today as it released the fourth and final set of results from samples drawn from January to March.

The announcement disappointed locals who've said for years that natural gas drilling tainted their water.

One of the 12 water wells tested had an elevated level of methane, the main ingredient of natural gas, but the samples "did not show levels of contaminants that would give EPA reason to take further action," the agency said.

EPA did take the step of warning the methane-tainted well's owner and informing both the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and local emergency responders of the situation.

"Throughout EPA's work in Dimock, the agency has used the best available scientific data to provide clarity to Dimock residents and address their concerns about the safety of their drinking water," spokesman Roy Seneca said in a statement.

Dimock, a hamlet 35 miles northwest of Scranton, was made famous by the 2010 documentary "Gasland," in which some of the town's homeowners appeared setting the water from their faucets on fire and discussing their chronic health problems.

Some residents say Houston-based Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. contaminated groundwater by drilling wells into the underground Marcellus Shale and fracturing the rock to release natural gas inside.

Drilling companies have bristled at scrutiny from the Obama administration, but they have claimed vindication with each release of data from Dimock wells, saying tests show their activities have not put people or the environment at risk.

"EPA again did not indicate that those contaminants that were detected bore any relationship to gas development in the Dimock area," Cabot spokesman George Stark said in an email today. "These contaminants are more likely indicative of naturally-occurring background levels or other unrelated activities."

EPA has now released results from 59 of the 61 wells in Dimock that it tested this year. The tests found elevated amounts of a number of contaminants, including arsenic, chromium and bacteria.

None of the tests found elevated levels of harmful drilling chemicals. Though elevated methane levels can signal contamination caused by faulty drilling, methane can also naturally enter aquifers.

EPA says it will finish its testing by resampling four wells where Cabot and state officials found contaminants that EPA did not. The agency will also contact three homeowners who said they wanted testing done but didn't make an appointment earlier this year.

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